

all necessary steps to safeguard the security interests of the country, including along the border.

Harassment of Indians in Afghanistan

†320. SHRIMATI MAYA SINGH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the religious places of the Hindus are being defaced and their habitation being destroyed in Afghanistan;

(b) if so, the action taken by Government in this regard; and

(c) whether Government have such data which may provide correct information of the oppression being done to the Hindus over there?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) There are no reports of religious places of Hindus being defaced and their habitation being destroyed in Afghanistan.

(c) During the nearly three decades of strife and conflicts in Afghanistan, there was widespread destruction of life and property, including those belonging to the Afghan Hindu community. After the overthrow of Taliban in 2001, the Indian Embassy and Consulates in Afghanistan have not received any report of oppression of the Hindu population in Afghanistan. Our Embassy is in regular touch with the Hindu community leaders in Afghanistan.

Agreement with ASEAN countries

321. SHRI K. CHANDRAN PILLAI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether agreements have been signed in various fields with ASEAN countries on the eve of the recently concluded ASEAN-India Summit; and

(b) if so, the details of agreements signed, field-wise?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) No agreement was signed between India-ASEAN

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

member countries during the 5th India-ASEAN Summit held in Cebu, the Philippines on 14 January 2007.

(b) Does not arise.

Strengthening of ties with Russia

322. SHRI DARA SINGH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) what steps Government propose to take or have taken so far to strengthen its ties with Russia;

(b) whether any agreement between the two Governments were signed in New Delhi during the recent visit of President of Russia; and

(c) if so, the details thereof, programme-wise indicating the projects in which Russia has expressed its desire to offer funds, project-wise, location-wise and investment-wise?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) The Government of India engages with the Government of the Russian Federation to promote mutually beneficial cooperation between the two countries and the two governments have established a frame-work in the form of bilateral agreements over a wide range of topics. In this context, there are India-Russia inter-governmental commissions on economic, scientific technological, cultural and military technical cooperation, which meet periodically. There are frequent high-level exchanges between the two countries and in January 2007; the President of the Russian Federation paid an official visit to India to further strengthen bilateral cooperation.

(b) and (c) The following documents were signed between the two governments during the January, 2007 visit of the President of the Russian Federation to India:

- 1) Joint Statement on the outcome of the official visit of the President of the Russian Federation to India;
- 2) Programme of Cultural Exchanges for the years 2007-09;
- 3) Protocol on holding "Year of Russia in India" in the year 2008 and "Year of India in Russia" in the year 2009;
- 4) Memorandum of Intent on development of cooperation in the construction of additional nuclear power plant units at the